

None Like Him: Sovereign

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Date: 11 November 2018

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[0 : 0 0] and now let's read together let's turn in our bibles to psalm number 95 on page 602 if you're using the church bible psalm number 95 and we will think together about the god who is king psalm 95 come let us sing for joy to the lord let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song for the lord is the great god the great king above all gods in his hand are the depths of the earth and the mountain peaks belong to him the sea is his for he made it and his hands formed the dry land come let us bow down in worship let us kneel before the lord our maker for he is our god and we are the people of his pasture the flock under his care today if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as you did at meribah as you did that day at massa in the desert where your fathers tested and tried me though they had seen what i did for 40 years i was angry with that generation i said they are a people whose hearts go astray and they have not known my ways so i declared on oath in my anger they shall never enter my rest okay so this is the the summary and the climax of where as a church we've been for the last ten weeks and we've been following the outline of a book called none like him written by a lady called jen wilkin exploring some of the the qualities the characteristics of god that mark him out as truly unique yes so we thought about god who has no limits he cannot be contained or measured the god who can be truly known but never fully known because our minds cannot comprehend his infinite greatness and we thought about a god who is self-existent who is fully self-sufficient unlike us who depend on so many different people god depends on no one we reflected on the god who is eternal and unchanging the god who possesses all wisdom and power who occupies all space and all along the way we've been seeing god is unlike us in those qualities and that's a good thing for us and it leads us logically to this final truth since that's who god is therefore it stands to reason and it's good news that god is king the god of the bible is presented to us as the king who has every right to sit on the throne of the universe and more personally for us who has the right to the devotion and worship of every human heart and the bible it is given to us as god's word to reveal his identity to reveal his works to us so that we would respond to him appropriately one of the things that we would have been taught as children i'm sure and one of the things that we as parents teach our children is to recognize and then respect authority figures so it begins at the home children to respect mum and dad but then

also teachers and the police and the police and the police and the police and the various authorities that make up our society we recognize and we treat them in the appropriate manner now i don't know if any of you some of you i know have done the course called christianity explored there's there's a story that that rico tice who kind of narrates that course he tells of being at a posh london dinner party and he's waiting in a lobby waiting to be welcomed into the room as one of the guests and he's standing there in the lobby with another fellow guest and so he says you know for 10 minutes or so there's a little bit of awkward chit chat and then they fall into a sort of semi and his part uncomfortable silence and he said he had this incredible shock when it struck him after the event that the person he was in the lobby with was none other than prince william his future king was there not more than a couple of meters away from him but he didn't recognize it and he felt really sad that he'd missed the chance to speak to his prince the one who would be king now those kind of stories are amusing mistaken identity it's not a big deal but when it comes to god that's tragedy if we reflect on god as he's revealed in the bible and it doesn't move our hearts to worship and obedience then that's tragic if we discover in the bible the story of jesus god's son and god's king and it doesn't move us to worship then that is a tragedy to give him anything less than all the devotion of our hearts is to miss the whole point of life we are creatures he is the creator we were created in order to be worshiping beings to know him to enjoy him and to bring glory to him we owe our lives to him every good gift that we enjoy comes from him all the security that we have is a gift

from him and he offers to us true life true love and true joy that comes from knowing him through jesus his son our savior so let's think together about what this psalm says to us about the god who is king i want to concentrate first on verses three to five where we really have the statement that god is king and to recognize that this is both the message and the mission of god's church of god's people so let's just read those verses together again for the lord is the great god the great king above all gods in his hand are the depths of the earth and the mountain peaks belong to him the sea is his for he made it and his hands formed the dry land okay so this is psalm 95 and it's part of a wider section psalms 93 to 100 form a collection known as the the royal psalms the big idea being that over against the idols of the nations and over against human independence and rejection of god god stands alone as the one true king people may try and resist him or reject him or ignore him but that does not alter the fact that god reigns and rules as king it's the point of verse three over against any false gods over against anything that we might consider worthy of our devotion the god of the bible is infinitely greater higher and more worthy he is in a class of his own and part of the way that the psalmist develops that in verses four and five goes back to the creation story using this wonderful imagery to say that our world is both in verse five handcrafted his hands formed the dry land and hand held here is the god who holds the oceans the depths of the earth in his hand our almighty god the king makes and sustains everything so compared to any human king or any human government that has some limited power and even that power is god given here we are presented with god alone as the true king the one creator god with absolute authority over everything and every one now for some people today i guess that would generate a level of suspicion towards god in a culture and society where authority isn't always approved of what does the psalmist think uh about god as king well he celebrates because he knows that unlike human powers and human kings who can sometimes use their power to abuse others god's rule is never harmful we studied the unchanging loving nature of god so trusting in this god is security not fear living under his rule is safe and good for us because ultimately it's what we were made for and so the message of the church and the mission of the church is to announce that god is king and to live under his rule to bring god's kingdom on the earth and that was the story from the very beginning look back in genesis with adam and eve god in his creative goodness supplied them with everything good that they needed for life including a perfect relationship with himself that god met with them and god spoke with them and god entrusted to them care for the earth and rule over the earth they were to be under god as stewards under his good and loving rule and spreading that good and loving rule in the way that they acted but then sin came and all of that was disrupted when they decided no we want to have that god-like status for ourselves we want to decide what good and evil looks like but god wasn't finished there god then chose out of his own sovereign goodness the nation of israel and israel discovered god as the true king who was far far greater than pharaoh we read of that in the book of exodus god works these mighty miracles to show he's a greater king than pharaoh that he's a superior god to the false gods of egypt and god eventually set the people of israel free he redeemed the nation why so that they would live as god's people under god's good and loving rule and as the people lived under god's rule their lifestyle their worship their laws were intended to be god's light shining in the darkness that the other nations were to look in and say there's something good and true and life-giving about israel's god israel's king i want that and they were to draw people in but sadly as we read the old testament we discover a history where israel often engaged in idolatry themselves where they chose time and again to reject god as king and where instead they pursued alternative gods and saviors but again god was not done what about in the new testament age well in the new testament age jesus came into the world announced as god's christ his anointed one his chosen king and jesus comes to bring in the kingdom of god as god's king and so he performs these mighty deeds these miracles as signposts of his glory and also signposts of his coming kingdom and when jesus calmed storms and got rid of diseases and raised the dead he was giving people a picture of what life would be like when he came again to renew all things a picture of hope and jesus called the church to pray and to pursue your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven calling us to submit to his rule calling others to come under the good and loving rule of jesus our king and when we read the gospels how is jesus presented he's presented to us as the perfect king perfect in his obedience where even the best of kings like king david they failed morally and spiritually jesus never did he is the truly obedient king he's also presented of course as our suffering and dying king representing his people there on the cross taking our sin on his shoulders paying the price to set us free so we might live once again under

god's good rule as god's people and then he's presented to us as our resurrected king the death was not the end he won that decisive victory over the powers of darkness and now he's returned to the glory of heaven as the exalted king so today jesus rules as king of kings and lord of lords and and the church awaits jesus our returning king that one day he's going to come and get rid of sin forever make everything new including his people so that we might live with him in perfect love and joy so this is our message and our mission that jesus is god's king he is the only way to know god he is the only way to live under the good and loving rule of god and so our summons the gospel summons is turn to him turn to jesus god's king submit your life to him pursue faith in him and enjoy the gift of eternal life so god is king that's our message that's our mission what about how do we respond according to this psalm well because god is the king we should respond with joyful worship we see that from the beginning psalm 95 verse 1 come let us sing for joy to the lord let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song psalm 95 throughout the history of the church has often been used as a call to worship to recognize the worth of god the king and to praise him with joy i wonder if we've ever stopped to think why is it in the christian church that we are a church that sings why are we a singing religion what is it about god's kingship god's rule that causes joy and song in our hearts rather than anxiety what is it that gives us hope and assurance rather than fear what is it about the rule of god that can allow us to rest in his arms rather than resisting him or fearing him it's because the god of the bible is a god of love and a god of grace and god's love and god's grace frees us from that great temptation that adam and eve fell into the temptation for ourselves to play god to try and save ourselves to try and be our own kings our own lords and rulers perhaps you are familiar with the poem invictus by william henley or more likely if you're like me you'll know the only two lines that anybody ever seems to know of that poem where he says i am the master of my fate i am the captain of my soul now that's a sentiment that's usually celebrated today and prince harry has the invictus games that's a wonderful celebration of of human spirit but taken to its extreme it sees us trying to dethrone god because we want that central place in our own stories and we can see that since the garden of eden men and women and boys and girls have been fighting for that throne denying god his proper place of rule in our hearts and in our lives but not so with the psalmist here what has the psalmist discovered about god the king that serves as the antidote to that grasping for power what can he say to us to help us submit gladly and joyfully to god as king three ideas first one in verse number one the psalmist says let us shout to the king to the king to the king to the king to the king to the king to the king we worship we serve a king who provides security because a rock speaks of unchanging strength speaks to us of stability it speaks of a hiding place from danger we know this in the city we can think about castle rock and edinburgh castle on the top that's the image when life spirals out of control for us when we realize life is beyond our ability to manage or control we can hear god say we can hear jesus say to us just as he said to his disciples do not be afraid for the i am is with you we have this god as our king we have true security and when we have that we can rise or like jesus said towards the end of the sermon on the mount that that him and his words are like a solid rock that we are to build our lives on so that no matter what storm comes even the storm of god's judgment we will stand because our lives are rooted on jesus the king so the psalmist will say to us that that knowing the the unchanging the all-powerful the all-wise the ever-present the unlimited god of the universe knowing him and knowing he's for you that's a unique source of security far greater than money in the bank relationship career status any of those things so this king provides security but this king also provides salvation

[20 : 27] again in verse 1 now there's this invitation to shout aloud to the rock of our salvation so again let's imagine just for a moment the israelites gathering through the generations to sing this song this song of faith and they could look back and remember for example all those miracles in egypt the way pharaoh was defeated so decisively at the red sea they could remember god providing for them in the wilderness they could look a bit further forward in their history to think about the conquest of canaan that god had promised them a land where they would dwell with him and the tiny nation of israel with god's help was able to defeat nations much stronger than them because god fought for them or they could think about the judges the judges that god raised up in answer to the people's prayer when they were facing oppression and opposition and the people cry out god sent judges and they were empowered by god's spirit to secure freedom for that generation they could think about the great king david his defeat of goliath his defeat of the nations expanding the territory of israel and defending the borders and all the while doing that as god's king there's an

invitation to reflect on god's acts of salvation what about for us our hope our rest our joy is also found in a king who saves and for us his name is jesus jesus means god saves think with me for a moment about the criminal who died with jesus on the cross remember that story jesus is hanging there and he's suffering and he's dying and the people are mocking him and there's large scale rejection but one of the criminals dying there with him said lord remember me when you come into your kingdom you can look on this dying man and recognize that he is utterly different to him that he is in fact god's king and jesus said to him today you will be with me in paradise that for jesus the cross meant victory yes it looked like defeat but it it meant victory it meant salvation the cross is where our king enters into conquest against his enemies the cross is where jesus defeats it's satan and the powers of sin and death securing for us forgiveness and new life and freedom as the children of god and all of that coming as a gift of his grace to be received by faith so we are a church that sings sings sings with joy because we have a rock who is our savior and this king he's not just our security he's not just our savior verses six and seven come let us bow down and worship let us kneel before the lord our maker for he is our god and we are the people of his pasture the flock under his care this king this mighty powerful king is our shepherd god deliberately in the bible chose the image of shepherd to speak of his kingly care and his personal care of his feeding his people guiding his people protecting his people sustaining them and so it's no surprise then when jesus comes and he picks up that same imagery in john 10 declaring i am title for god the good shepherd the one who lays down his life

for his people the one who goes out to search for his people to bring them home the one who will ensure that none of his people are lost and so the psalm is helping us to see that trusting this king living gladly under his rule is for our ultimate good yes sometimes authority and power is abused but not by god the king not by jesus our king and that's good news for us personally you know when we when we find times of sadness come we're confused by the circumstances that come into our lives or we're wrestling to make a wise decision in all of those moments and in all points in life we know that we are not on our own that our eternal self-sufficient unlimited god and savior is the shepherd who comes alongside us and therefore the psalmist says to us trust and love and worship are the logical response to this god to this king but there's another response that we are called to from the second part of verse 7 down to verse 11 we're called to respond by hearing with faith as we read you probably noticed the tone of the psalm changing gone is the exuberant joy now we're left with a stark warning from israel's past history today second part of verse 7 if you hear his voice do not harden your hearts as you did at meribah as you did that day at massa in the desert where your fathers tested and tried me though they had seen what i did so here's the somber reality for us it is entirely possible to see the power and the glory of the eternal king and to be utterly unmoved by it this generation that's been referred to they saw all the miracles of god in egypt and in the wilderness and yet their hearts do not warm to god they did not gladly respond to him as king israel had been set free they'd been moved out of slavery in egypt by god's power with god himself leading them and yet we find them testing god quarreling against god grumbling against god testing him refusing to take him at his word a generation marked by a horrible unbelief and it'd be really easy to judge them and dismiss them and say well that was awful but we would never do the same but it makes sense for us to reflect because the psalmist says to us we need to reflect so that we can learn from that negative example so in our own lives to greater and lesser extent we have seen we have seen we have heard of what god the king has done for us the bible speaks of god as creator god as sustainer the god who gives us every good gift the one who sent jesus to be our lord and our savior but yet is faith always our first response if we're honest with ourselves i imagine we discover that we too can be slow to listen we can be stubborn to change we can be resistant to god's rule to god's authority we can be hard-hearted

when faced with the glory of god our king so the psalm poses a question to us do i respond to god with faith and obedience which voice do i listen to the one that calls us to sing and to rest and rejoice in god or the voice within us that wants to be god like there is an urgent call here today if you hear his voice don't grumble against him don't test him instead hear with faith so that you might enter god's rest see verse 11 so i declared on oath in my anger they shall never enter my rest that's what it's what's at stake here god's rest equals god's salvation it means god and his people together for them that was represented by the promised land for us that's eternal glory jesus our king came to secure our salvation our rest for us do we respond to him with faith and obedience do we find rest in him rest from struggling to be our king to try and be master of our own fate instead to submit to

him to trust him to follow his way and not ours do we trust in jesus and turn to him and rest from struggling to secure our identity because the bible is clear that when we trust in jesus we become children we become children of god he delights in us that's who we are we are redeemed sons and daughters of the king we don't need to fight to earn our salvation we don't need to struggle to prove ourselves god already approves of us when our faith is in jesus and there is rest therefore from worrying about our future christianity presents assurance not because of our work not because of our faith but who our faith is in we can have assurance when we're trusting entirely on what jesus did for us now at the cross through his resurrection and what he's doing for us now as our king he has secured the future glory for his people which is true rest this is our king our security our savior our shepherd the one who we are called to respond to with joy and to hear with faith so as our series on on the character of god comes to a close the question facing all of us is will you and i entrust our lives to jesus god's king will we live for his glory and know his joy let's pray